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Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 AF-10 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02
SS-15 USIA-06 SY-05 MCT-01 OMB-01 IO-13 /088 W
----------118927 290134Z /73
R 281915Z JUN 77
FM AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1718
INFO AMEMBASSY LISBON
AMCONSUL OPORTO
COMUSFORAZ
USCINCEUR
CINCLANT

C O N F I D E N T I A L PONTA DELGADA 0239

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, PO
SUBJECT: AZOREAN DEVELOPMENTS: MORE VIOLENCE

1. EARLY MORNING JUNE 26 SEVERAL SHOTS WERE FIRED INTO THE HOMES OF BRIG. LEMOS, THE COMMANDER OF THE ARMY IN THE AZORES, AND OF THE DIRECTOR OF THE PONTA DELGADA HIGH SCHOOL. THERE WERE NO INJURIES AND VERY MINOR PROPERTY DAMAGE. BECAUSE FLA LEADER JOSE ALMEIDA WAS RECENTLY SUSPENDED FROM HIS JOB AS TEACHER AT THE HIGH SCHOOL THE CONSENSUS IS THAT FLA WAS RESPONSIBLE. THIS IS THE SECOND ACT OF VIOLENCE THIS MONTH IN PONTA DELGADA. TWO WEEKS AGO A MODERATE SIZE BOMB EXPLODED AT THE COURT HOUSE, BLOWING OUT A NUMBER OF WINDOWS.

2. FLA LEADER SUSPENDED FROM JOB: THE GOP HAS SUSPENDED JOSE ALMEIDA FOR TWO YEARS FROM HIS HIGH SCHOOL TEACHING POST BECAUSE HE ABANDONED HIS POSITION IN 1975 WHEN HE WENT TO THE U.S. TO PROMOTE AZOREAN INDEPENDENCE. AT A MEETING CALLED TO DISCUS THE SUSPENSION, TWO THIRDS OF HIGH SCHOOL TEACHERS PRESENT VOTED TO SUPPORT ALMEIDA. THE FLA LEADER MEANWHILE HAS
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DRAWN CONSIDERABLE ATTENTION BY TAKING A JOB AS A STEVADOR, AND HIS SUPPORTERS HAVE PLASTERED THE TOWN WITH HUNDREDS OF POSTERS BEARING HIS PICTURE.

3. P.S. TAKES A HARD LINE ON AZOREAN FLAG. THE P.S. HAS ANNOUNCED THAT IT WILL QUIT THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY IF THAT BODY APPROVES A REGIONAL FLAG SIMILAR TO THE FLAG USED BY SEPARATISTS.

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REPORTS FROM THE COMMITTEE CHARGED WITH DESIGNING THE FLAG, WHICH INCLUDES AN ARMY HERALDIC EXPERT, INDICATE THE FLAG WILL BE BLUE AND WHITE, HAVE AN "AZOR"(HAWK) AND NINE STARS AS THE "SEPARATIST" FLJG DOES, BUT WILL DIFFER SIGNIFICANTLY.

4. GOP FAVORS A NEW STATUTE OF AUTONOMY: A MEMBER OF THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT INFORMED ME THAT MARIO SOARES TOLD MOTA AMARAL DURING HIS RECENT LISBON VISIT THAT THE GOP WANTS THE AZORES TO DRAFT A DEFINITIVE STATUTE OF AUTONOMY WHICH WOULD SETTLE THE QUESTION OF THE TRANSFER OF PERIPHERAL GOVERNMENT SERVICES, WHICH ARE CURRENTLY UNDER LISBON'S CONTROL BUT SHOULD BE TRANSFERED TO REGIONAL CONTROL ACCORDING TO THE PROVISIONAL STATUTE OF AUTONOMY. THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT SEES THIS AS A PLOY TO DELAY AND PERHAPS AVOID THE TRANSFER; IT BEGIEVES THE GOP WOULD ATTEMPT TO REDUCE THE SCOPE OF AUTONOMY IF A DEFINITIVE STATUTE WERE SUBMITTED TO LISBON FOR APPROVAL. THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT HAS NO INTENTION OF DRAFTING A DEFINITIVE STATUTE IN THE NEAR FUTURE.
THE SOURCE ALSO SAID REGIONAL GOVERNMENT WAS VERY CONCERNED ABOUT THE LATEST FLA VIOLENCE,AND ABOUT P.S. THREAT TO ABANDON THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY OVER THE FLAG QUESTION.

5. COMMENT: THE SUPPORT THAT JOSE ALMEIDA RECEIVED FROM HIS FELLOW TEACHERS DOES NOT MEAN THAT THEY ARE SEPARATISTS, BUT RATHER THEY BELIEVE IT UNJUST FOR ALMEIDA TO BE PUNISHED FOR HIS SEPARATIST ACTIVITIES IN 1975, A TIME WHEN MOST FAVORED IN-DEPENDENCE. THERE ARE A GOOD NUMBER OF AZOREANS WHO DO NOT
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FAVOR INDEPENDENCE, BUT WHO DO NOT BELIEVE THAT SEPARATISTS SHOULD BE PUNISHED FOR THEIR BELIEFS. SEVERAL MONTHS AGO THE P.S. ATTEMPTED TO GEO THE REGIONAL ASSEMBLY TO DISMISS ALMEIDA FROM HIS TEACHING POSITION, BUT THE PSD REFUSED TO GO ALONG.

THE RAPID TRANSFER OF PERIPHERAL SERVICES TO REGIONAL CONTROL RECENTLY HAS BEEN A MAJOR ISSUE BETWEEN THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT AND LISBON AND THE PRIMARY THEME OF MOST STATEMENTS BY AZOREAN AUTHORITIES. THE REGIONAL GOVERNMENT, WHICH HAS REITERATED ITS BELIEF IN PROGRESSIVE AUTONOMY, CAN NOT BE EXPECTED TO GIVE IN ON THIS ISSUE WHICH IT BELIEVES FUNDAMENTAL. TO AZOREAN OFFICIALS SEPARATIST PROBLEMS AND THE DESIGN OF THE REGIONAL FLAG ARE SECONDARY PROBLEMS WHICH GAIN IMPORTANCE ONLY TO THE DEGREE IN WHICH THEY COMPLICATE THE RESOLUTION OF MORE IMPORTANT ISSUES, SUCH AS THE RAPID TRANSFER OF PERIPHERAL SERVICES.
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